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The Checklist:

An Editing Tool for your Personal Statements

Nobody's first draft is their last draft. This checklist will better equip you to complete your own edits more efficiently, and to skillfully sort through advice you receive. Your goal now is to create the best piece of writing you can, given the word limits and time constraints — not to create the best piece of writing, ever!

Consult your career counsellors, mentors, advisors, and other credible sources for feedback. In particular, try to include people with expertise and insight into your specialties, who know you well, and who have strengths in writing. Give each reviewer a purpose as they read to get more tailored feedback (rather than general comments), such as: *Does this sound like me? Is the writing too formal, too casual? Have I answered question X and question Y clearly?* etc.

Together we can review your responses to The Checklist in your 2nd round appointment.

Finally, you may also wish to use this checklist to limit your revisions — at some point, your letter is good enough, and further edits only make it different rather than stronger.

Please rate your current draft on a scale of 1 to 5, plus *unsure*:

1 = strongly disagree 4 = agree

2 = disagree 5 = strongly agree

3 = neutral U = unsure

MY CURRENT DRAFT	**1 – 5 / U**
I have answered all parts of the prompt or questions	
The letter clearly expresses what I most want readers to know about me	
I am happy with the ideas I have expressed in this letter	
I provide evidence of what I say:(e.g. through descriptions of clinical experiences; my non-clinical experiences; times of greatest learning; reactions I have seen to me from patients, their families, and colleagues; feedback from preceptors)	
My draft fits with the culture and characteristics of the discipline	
The WHY is clearly expressed: why I am drawn to this discipline, why this discipline will help me make meaningful impacts	
The WHAT is clearly expressed: what, specifically, I like about this discipline	
Why I like program X is specific and genuine	
Give vs. get balance: my content mentions more about what I hope to *contribute* to patients, colleagues and others, the program/field vs. what I hope to *get* from the program and my career	
The TONE of the letter is natural, appropriate, respectful of myself and others	
The writing stimulates readers' interest	

GRAMMAR & MECHANICS	1 – 5 / U
The draft meets the word limit, as indicated in the instructions	
The paragraphs are divided logically; the topic of each paragraph is clear	
There is good cohesion and narrative flow within paragraphs and overall	
I use a combination of simple and compound sentences	
I have reviewed my use of commas, colons, and semicolons; they are used correctly	
I have reviewed my use of long and compound sentences, and have rewritten where necessary to make the ideas clearer	
The supporting sentences “prove” the main idea	
Few paragraphs and sentences start with *I* and *My*	
Vocabulary choice accurately conveys the meaning I intend	
Signal and transition words are concise (*finally* vs. *in the end*)	

AUTHENTICITY	1 – 5 / U
The letter sounds like me, conveys my voice	
The tone of the letter accurately reflects my attitude (enthusiasm)	
The ideas in the letter matter deeply to me	
The draft is personal and expressive	

CREDIBILITY	1 – 5 / U
I provide examples and evidence to support my stories, claims, experiences	
The examples and evidence are appropriate	
My text places emphasis on the actions I took and the results of the experience (what I learned from it), and less on the setting and task	

Updated July 2025 - Claire P. Rivlin